



City Connection

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HOT Board works to assist community organizations, causes

Since August 2009, the Hotel Occupancy Tax Board has worked to provide a diverse group of community organizations with more than \$48,000 in monetary support to bring out-of-town tourists to Huntsville.

Working with organizations committed to cultural diversity, historical preservation, athletics and other interests, the Board – which is composed of both City Council members and Huntsville residents – is committed to bringing overnight newcomers to the city.

“The Hotel Occupancy Tax Board is doing what it was set up to do, and that is to support local organizations who present worthy projects geared to bringing people to town to spend the night, stay in hotels and support hotel industry, and support local businesses,” HOT Board Chairman Charles Forbus said. “We want to fund events that really spread the word about what a beautiful and exciting city Huntsville is, and we feel like we’re doing a good job of that so far.”

Six organizations or groups have received funding from the HOT Board since August 2009 including the Huntsville Amateur Baseball Association for the Stan Musial World Series, the HEARTS Veterans Museum, the Samuel Walker Houston Museum and Cultural Center, the Walker County Fair and Pro-Rodeo Committee, the Sam Houston Folk Festival and the Walker County Historical Commission.

“We didn’t have a lot of discretionary money to work with, but we did some pretty interesting things with that money in terms of giving to community groups that had never received HOT money before, or at least getting them started on a process whereby they can look to us for support,” HOT Board member Dick Lindeman said at the board’s March 11 meeting. “These groups fully qualified for HOT funds under the state laws pertaining to hotel occupancy tax distribution, and the events we have supported

have been beneficial to the community.”

The first organization to receive monetary assistance – a total of \$8,700 – was the Huntsville Amateur Baseball Association. The group used the money to pay for various expenses associated with the Stan Musial World Series.

In September 2009, the Board made a recommendation to City Council to award \$12,000 to the HEARTS Veterans Museum in quarterly increments. The recommendation was approved, and representatives from the HEARTS Veterans Museum were later able to travel to an exclusive conference related to reunion and event planning.

Then, in December 2009, the Council approved a HOT Board recommendation to provide \$9,000 in funding to the Samuel Walker Houston Museum and Cultural Center, for the purpose of marketing its biennial summer event.

Three separate funding packages were approved in March 2010, beginning with \$10,000 provided to the Walker County Fair and Pro-Rodeo Committee. According to Mayor Pro Tem Lanny Ray, \$6,000 of the funding was to be used for advertising the event, while the other \$4,000 would be used for other fair expenses.

The City Council also approved two allocations at the March 23 meeting, one in the amount of \$3,000 to the Sam Houston Folk Festival, and one in the amount of \$6,000 to the Walker County Historical Commission.

In the March 11 HOT Board meeting, Chairman Forbus said the funding for the Sam Houston Folk Festival would be used for additional advertising, while the \$6,000 to the Historical Commission would be used in part for improvements to the Gibbs-Powell Home and in part for tour projects.

With the approval of the \$9,000 expenditures, all Hotel Occupancy Tax funding for the 2009-10 fiscal year was exhausted.

Street Department aims for swift response to potholes, other safety concerns

This year, the City of Huntsville conducted a citizen survey to assess the most important concerns in the minds of Huntsville residents. Among the responses to the survey, one of the items noted as a concern was the presence of potholes and other safety concerns on City streets.

According to Bill Baine, City Manager, citizens should know many street damages which may appear to be potholes are actually damages caused by utility repairs and other infrastructure repairs.

“Among the survey results, we heard about many potholes, and we certainly want to make improvements in those areas,” City Manager Bill Baine said. “However, I believe many of the damages citizens see as potholes are actually caused by the repair processes for underground leaks caused because our waterlines and sewer lines are often on the centerline of existing streets. As the lines go bad, it creates a large pothole which must be fixed by the street department. More and more of these cuts appear as our lines age.

“The Street Department does have a schedule they use to address these concerns, which can sometimes involve starting repairs, allowing the filling used to coalesce around pipes or other elements correctly, then completing repairs at a later point.”

Street Superintendent David Welch said a large percentage of the

road damages are actually areas in the process of being repaired.

“A percentage of the damage citizens see as potholes are actually utility cuts,” he said. “When the water department cuts into a street to make repairs, it may be that they make part of the repair, leave it to set, then notify us to make the rest later.

“Sometimes if the fill put in first didn’t pack very well, we have to go back and re-work that fill before we can cover the damage completely.”

In addition to working swiftly to repair existing damages, Welch said his department also practices extensive preventative maintenance measures to keep road hazards from becoming a concern.

“We’ve been doing preventative maintenance since 1985 to prevent pothole problems and other street concerns,” Welch said. “I always try to be proactive, meaning I drive around old roads I know may be in need of repairs to check for potholes and other concerns.

Citizens with concerns about potholes or other road damages may contact Welch at (936) 294-5727 or online at dwelch@huntsvilletx.gov.

TDCJ, City partnership leads to improved sidewalks and parks

Community responds favorably to work of TDCJ offender labor crew

Since January, City of Huntsville Parks Department crews have worked side by side with a group of offenders from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Huntsville "Walls" Unit to improve local sidewalks.

The group of offenders – which consists of three or four men at a time supervised by TDCJ Correctional Officer David McCoy – has worked from the center of downtown Huntsville outward on several highly utilized streets.

"This crew was put together for us by Warden Charles O'Reilly of the Walls Unit, and its main tasking is to clear vegetation and complete minor concrete repairs such as uneven joints and other tripping hazards from our community's sidewalks," said Matt Lumpkins, Community Services Director for the City. "The crew started work in the area around City Hall and are continuing out from there."

"This will be an ongoing project and we plan to cover the entire community."

According to David Zeller, City Horticulturalist, the offender crew has covered a significant portion of the streets in the center of the City, including portions of the Avenues, parts of downtown Huntsville and other areas.

Before beginning work in any given area, Parks crews distribute written notification to homeowners to make them aware of the offender crew's upcoming presence. As well, Lumpkins and Zeller are routinely present in order to answer any questions posed by residents, business owners and other observers.

"Our first few grids have included the area between Avenue O and Sam Houston Avenue from 11th Street to 15th Street as well as 19th Street to 22nd Street," Zeller said on April 15. "Over the next few weeks, we plan to work between Avenue O and Avenue Q from 15th Street to 19th Street. Currently, we're working on the area between Sam Houston Avenue and Avenue I, going all the way south to 17th Street. That area includes Rather Park, where the crew assisted with moving several pieces of concrete furniture."

"Using written notifications to let people know we're coming has worked really well so far. We understand people are used to seeing offenders working in creeks or parks, but not necessarily in their front yards, so we're happy to answer any questions before and while we're out working."

According to McCoy, the group of offenders – who work five day weeks from around 8:15 a.m. through 3 p.m., depending on other unit operations – enjoys the opportunity to work for the improvement and beautification of Huntsville.

"They actually like being part of the work crew because they're getting out of the unit and doing something for community," McCoy said. "They see the work as a way of giving back, and they really enjoy the interaction they've had with people coming out and giving compliments for a job well done."

Good impressions

An unexpected result – in addition to safer and more accessible sidewalks – has been the positive response of community members who have seen the work completed by the group.

Caroline Leonard, a Huntsville resident whose home is located in one of the work areas, said she feels the offenders have done a commendable job with the sidewalk improvements.

"Not only do the offenders do an excellent job, but it's also clear that the work matters to them, and that's very refreshing to see," she said. "What helps as a resident is having [Parks Superintendent] Matt Lumpkins and [City Horticulturalist] David Zeller come before the crews, to let us know they'll be working and what they'll be doing."

"Keeping communication open is a very important part of this program."

Michael Henderson, a professor in the Sam Houston State University Art



Photo by Kristin Edwards

Three offenders currently serving sentences in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Huntsville "Walls" Unit work to improve and beautify sidewalks on University Avenue. While working in the community, the crew, which can include additional men, is monitored by TDCJ Correctional Officer David McCoy and members of the City Parks Department.

Department, said he has walked his dog in the areas where the offender crew has worked and has also seen good work being completed.

"It is kind of odd to see inmates out in the community working, but the results are certainly positive," he said. "I think it's definitely good to see them doing something that benefits our community, and I know they've really made our sidewalks more accessible and better maintained."

Residents have also expressed appreciation for the work City crews have done to fine-tune the skills of the offender crew.

"In my opinion, David Zeller and the rest of the Parks staff have done a marvelous job training the TDCJ offenders as well as helping to instill in them a sense of aesthetics, a concern for the environment and also pride in their work," Huntsville resident George Russell said. "I have been extremely pleased with the high quality of the work that has been done on sidewalks in the area of the historic Sam Houston Homestead."

Additional crews

The Parks Department is currently also working with a concrete crew from the TDCJ Wynne Unit, whose current focus is pouring a sidewalk at the entrance of the Huntsville Aquatic Center, as well as a drainage crew from the Ellis Unit.

"We're very appreciative of the increased efforts and support of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as well as the partnership of Warden Charles O'Reilly at the Walls Unit, Warden Eileen Kennedy of the Ellis Unit, Warden Vernon Pittman of the Wynne Unit and Warden Detrah Lacy from the Goree Unit," City Manager Bill Baine said.

Recycling Pilot at Elkins Lake - Update submitted by Jenine Dean, Solid Waste Assistant Superintendent

The average participation rate is at 63%, thanks to all your efforts! To date, a total of 64.31 tons in recyclables have been collected. That is an astounding 128,620 pounds with only eight pickups. The more recycling we collect, the more we can keep out of the landfills.

Elkins Lake residents, please remember that your recycling days are the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month. There is no garbage pickup on Thursdays at Elkins Lake during the Pilot Program. In addition to office paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, newspaper, steel cans and magazines, plastics numbered 1 - 7 are acceptable items to be placed into the recycling cart. Look for any of these recycling symbols on the bottom of your plastic containers:



Eighty percent of all plastic containers from the grocery store are recyclable. **No styrofoam** (even if it has a number and symbol) of any kind should be placed inside the recycling cart. If there are items that you are unsure of, please feel free to call us at 936-294-5743. For additional Recycling Guidelines please visit our website, www.huntsvilletx.gov and click on Recycling Pilot Program – Elkins Lake. Thank you for recycling and keep up the great work!

Think GREEN – HGAC Published Recycling Tidbits

How long does it take for items to breakdown in the landfill?

Plastic Bottles: 1 Million years	Glass: 1 Million years
Aluminum Cans: 50 to 200 years	Paper: 1 to 5 months
Disposable Diapers: 500 years	Batteries: 100 years

Recycling is one of the most important actions you can take. Only 1/10 of garbage gets recycled but over half of it could be.

Weatherization funds available through BVCAA

City residents in need of weatherization for their homes are urged to contact the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, Inc.

According to Dr. Sherry McKibben, Community Development Specialist with the City of Huntsville, BVCAA is currently administering \$500,000 in granted funding from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs on the City's behalf.

"This grant is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and its purpose is to reduce energy consumption in households," McKibben said.

"The funds from this grant will be used to put in insulation, caulk windows, evaluate current heat and air conditioning appliances and replace non-efficient refrigerators."

Based on the parameters of the grant, priority will be given to elderly residents, disabled residents, families with children five years of age or younger, households with a high-energy burden or households with high-energy consumption.

Household types eligible for the grant include single family homes, mobile homes and multi-family units, and both owners and renters may apply. However, only those whose income does not exceed 200 percent of the poverty level may apply.

"Whether you are a senior, disabled, on a fixed income, a homeowner or a renter, I would strongly urge you to submit an application," McKibben said. "If your home has never been weatherized, or it has been a significant number of years since improvements have been made, submit an application and find out if you qualify."

"The \$500,000 in funds was awarded to the City on Sept. 1, 2009, and the BVCAA has until September 2011 to spend this money in our community or it will go somewhere else. Applications are available both at City Hall and on the BVCAA Web site, <http://www.bvcaa.org>."

Homes already weatherized by the program after Sept. 30, 1994 are also not eligible for additional financial assistance. If you are not sure if your home was in the program previously, apply and BVCAA will have records.

For more information, program qualifications and questions relating to weatherization, call (979) 822-4100 or (877) 54-BVCAA.

Residents may also contact McKibben at (936) 291-5428 or Charlotte Meadows, Assistant Community Development Specialist, at (936) 291-5442.

Program Year 2009 Income Limits for DOE and LIHEAP Energy Assistance Programs. (effective September 3, 2009)

Persons in family	200% of Federal Poverty Income Guidelines
1	\$21,660
2	\$29,140
3	\$36,620
4	\$44,100
5	\$51,580
6	\$59,060
7	\$66,540
8	\$74,020
For families with more than 8 persons, add \$7,480 for each additional person.	

**The City of Huntsville's
175th Birthday
July 12, 2010
(Demi-Semi-Sept-
Centennial...)
It's Coming Up!**

Wildflowers in bloom



Photo by Kristin Edwards

Bachelor's Buttons grow outside the Service Center.

All around the City of Huntsville, wildflowers of all shapes and sizes are now in full bloom, and residents are urged to take a walk or a drive to see the natural beauties before their season ends.

An abundance of Bluebonnets, Bachelor's Buttons, Crimson clover and several other specimens have covered the City's parks, trails and streets in colors only available in the spring.

However, according to Director of Parks and Recreation Matt Lumpkins, the flowers will begin to seed in the middle of May. At that point, City crews will begin the process of mowing the areas where the flowers have grown.

"Every year, we give our wildflowers time to go to seed before we mow," Lumpkins said. "In other words, we wait for the flowers to die and for their seeds to fall off into the ground.

"That way, when we mow over the areas where the flowers have grown this year, the seeds for next year's wildflowers will be waiting safely."

The City of Huntsville Parks Department and the Huntsville Beautification Committee contribute to the planting and funding of wildflowers.

Calendar

May 2010

- 4 City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1212 Avenue M
- 5 Yard Waste Trimming Collection - no call in required
- 6 Recycling Pick-up in Elkins Lake
- 12 Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste Collection — **call in required** (936) 294-5796
- 18 City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1212 Avenue M
- 19 Yard Waste Trimming Collection - no call in required
- 20 Recycling Pick-up in Elkins Lake
- 26 Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste Collection — **call in required**

June 2010

- 1 City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1212 Avenue M
- 2 Yard Waste Trimming Collection - no call in required
- 3 Recycling Pick-up in Elkins Lake
- 9 Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste Collection — **call in required**
- 15 City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1212 Avenue M
- 16 Yard Waste Trimming Collection - no call in required
- 17 Recycling Pick-up in Elkins Lake
- 23 Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste Collection — **call in required**
- 30 Yard Waste Trimming Collection - no call in required

Please note: All requests for Heavy Trash pick-up must be made no later than noon on Monday, the week of the pick-up.

For Your Information

The City of Huntsville biennial survey is now available online on the City of Huntsville's Web site, www.huntsvilletx.gov. From the homepage, scroll down to the City News section, and the link to the survey is below. Please take a moment to share your thoughts with us.

Also, in addition to the City of Huntsville's own Web site, citizens can also go to Facebook or Twitter to keep up with City news.

On Facebook.com, just search "City of Huntsville" and become a fan. Or, follow us on Twitter through <http://twitter.com/HuntsvilleTexas>.

Police/Fire Statistics: March 2010

Police:

- ◆ Calls for service: **4721**
- ◆ Accidents investigated: **90**
- ◆ Animal Control complaints investigated: **85**

Fire:

- ◆ Calls for service: **93**
- ◆ Main alarm calls: **14**